

Somerset Youth and Community Service

Responsible pet ownership session plan

Aim: To enable the group to understand responsible pet ownership

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the session the participants will:

- ➔ By able to list the factors that make up responsible pet ownership
- ➔ Have calculated the cost of owning three different types of pet
- ➔ Have created a plan for owning the pet of their choice

Group size: 6 -9

Time: 1 hour

Venue: Small room or quiet space

Materials:

- Pens
- Blank paper
- Budget sheets (included)
- Handouts / information sheets as needed (included)
- Flipchart paper and marker pens

TIME	WHAT	WITH
5 mins	Introduce the session	
10 mins	Split the group into three – one called cats, one called rabbits and one called dogs. Ask each group to list the good things about owning their pet, and what work would be involved.	Pens and blank paper
10 mins	Get feedback from each group	
10 mins	Using the budget form included, ask each group to list the costs involved in getting their pet (this doesn't include the price of the pet itself) and then keeping it.	Budget sheets
10 mins	Using the information sheets, go through each of the lists asking for others' views and correcting information. Give the 'lifetime' cost for each pet at the end of each budget.	Information sheets
10 mins	Brainstorm: ask the group what responsible pet ownership is – that is, what they have to do to make sure the animal lives a long and happy life – use the 'Responsible pet ownership' sheet as a prompt.	Flipchart paper and pens
5 mins	Ask for questions, and if anyone is seriously considering getting a pet, give the appropriate information sheets.	Information sheets



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Pet budget

For your pet, lists the costs involving in getting it, then keeping it!

Dogs

Item	One-Off Costs	Annual Costs
Equipment		
Spaying/Neutering		
Microchipping		
Food		
Worming		
Flea Treatment		
Vet's Fees		
Insurance		
Extras		
Total		

Cats

Item	One-Off Cost	Annual Costs
Equipment		
Spaying/Neutering		
Microchipping		
Food		
Cat Litter		
Worming		
Flea Treatment		
Vet's Fees		
Insurance		
Extras		
Total		

Rabbits

Item	One-off costs	Annual costs
Equipment		
Spaying / neutering		
Microchipping		
Food and hay		
Woodshavings / litter		
Vaccinations		
Insurance		
Extras		
Total		



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The cost of pet ownership and things to think about

Dogs

Below is an approximate guide to the costs of keeping a dog.

Equipment

When buying a dog or puppy it will be necessary to purchase equipment such as dog bed, collar, lead, toys, etc and this can cost up to £200.

Feed

The cost of food will vary according to the size of the dog and whether a complete dry dog food or tinned meat and biscuits is fed but dog food will cost approximately £15-£20 per month.

Worming

A dog will require routine worming treatments and these can cost £10-£15 every 3 months.

Flea Treatment

A dog will require regular flea treatments and these can cost around £5 per month.

Vets Fees And Insurance

A young puppy needs to be vaccinated against canine distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza and leptospirosis and these vaccinations can cost around £100-£120 initially. Then, the dog will require annual boosters at a cost of £50-£60.

Insurance to cover vets fees in the event that the dog suffers an illness or injury can be obtained and this can cost £8-£18 per month.

Neutering

Spaying or neutering a dog can cost £60-£180.

Microchipping

Microchipping a dog costs an average of £15-£20.

Extras

Although the main regular costs of keeping a dog are listed above there are always unexpected costs that occur. In addition it is often necessary to purchase medical products for minor cuts, shampoos, replace equipment, etc. All such costs can mount up over a year. Therefore it is always best to factor in an additional cost of £200-£500 per annum for extras when working out whether keeping a dog can be afforded.

Summary

The table over the page gives a summary of the average annual costs involved in owning a dog.



Item	One-Off Costs	Annual Costs
Equipment	£200	
Spaying/Neutering	£60-£180	
Microchipping	£15-£20	
Food		£180-£240
Worming		£40-£60
Flea Treatment		£60
Vet's Fees	£100-£120	£50-£60
Insurance		£96-£216
Extras		£200-£500
Total	£375 - £520	£626 - £1,136

This means that an average sized dog could cost over £9,000 if it lives for 10 years, or over £13,500 if it lives for 15 years!

Things to think about when buying a dog

Taking on a dog as a pet is a big commitment and should not be taken lightly. A dog will need attention, routine veterinary treatment, training, grooming and daily care for 10-15 years.

Too many dogs end up in rescue homes waiting to be re-homed due to an owner deciding after buying the dog that they cannot give it the care it needs or cope with the financial commitment of owning a dog, the novelty of dog ownership wearing off, changes in circumstances or some other reason. Just as anyone would give careful consideration to their circumstances, lifestyle, commitment, time etc before starting a family, buying a dog should be considered in the same way.

A dog will affect every household member and is not the same as one member of the family having a small pet which they are responsible for and other family members having little or no involvement with. A dog must be wanted by all the household and all must be willing to involve themselves equally with the dog as a new family member.

A dog is not a pet that a child can be expected to be solely responsible for and will need an adult carer. It is important to consider other pets in the household and all family members when choosing a dog as a pet to ensure a dog will fit into the lifestyle and environment of the family as a whole.

Although some dogs are fairly independent and happy to amuse themselves for periods of time, they are sociable animals and so it is not ideal to get a dog if it is going to be left alone all day throughout the week while owner(s) are at work and/or school. Some dogs left alone regularly for long periods of time can become bored and this can often lead to destructive or anti-social behaviour.

The type of dog suitable for a particular adult or family will vary. Some breeds require more space, exercise and care than others. The size and characteristics of the dog will also have a bearing on suitability for the environment in which it is to live.



Cats

Below is an approximate guide to the costs of keeping a cat.

Equipment

When buying a cat or kitten it will be necessary to purchase equipment such as cat bed, toys, litter tray, collar, scratching post, etc and this can cost up to £200.

Feed

The cost of cat food will vary according to the size of the cat and whether a complete dry cat food or tinned meat and biscuits is fed but cat food will cost approximately £15-£20 per month.

Cat Litter

The amount of cat litter needed will vary depending on how much of the time the cat spends indoors but will cost approximately £5-£10 a month.

Worming

A cat will require routine worming treatments and this can cost £10-£15 every 3 months.

Flea Treatment

A cat will require regular flea treatments and this can cost around £5 per month.

Vets Fees And Insurance

A young kitten needs to be vaccinated against [cat flu](#), [feline entiritis](#) and feline leukaemia and these vaccinations can cost around £60-£80 initially and then the cat will require annual boosters at a cost of £40-£50.

Medical costs if the cat or kitten becomes ill or suffers an accident can be costly but these costs can be covered by taking out pet insurance. Pet insurance to cover a cat can cost £6-£15 per month.

Neutering

Spaying or neutering a cat can cost £40-£50.

Microchipping

Microchipping a cat can cost £15-£20.

Extras

Although the main regular costs of keeping a cat are listed above there are always unexpected costs that occur. In addition it is often necessary to purchase medical products for minor cuts, shampoos, replace equipment, etc. All such costs can mount up over a year and add to the cost of owning a cat. Therefore it is always best to factor in an additional cost of £200-£500 each year for extras when working out whether keeping a cat can be afforded.

Summary

The table over the page gives a summary of the average annual costs involved in keeping a cat.



Item	One-Off Cost	Annual Costs
Equipment	£200	
Spaying/Neutering	£40-£50	
Microchipping	£15-£20	
Food		£180-£240
Cat Litter		£60-£120
Worming		£40-£60
Flea Treatment		£60
Vet's Fees	£60-£80	£40-£50
Insurance		£72-£180
Extras		£200-£500
Total	£315-£350	£652-£910

This means that an average cat could cost over £8,000 if it lives for 10 years, or over £12,000 if it lives for 15 years!

Things to think about when buying a cat

Buying a cat requires a commitment to provide proper care for it during its life and in the case of kittens this can be for 10-15 years or longer. Too many cats end up in rescue homes due to an owner deciding after buying the cat that they cannot give it the care it needs or cannot cope with the financial commitment of owning a cat so consider these things carefully before buying a kitten or cat.

A cat is not a pet that a child can be expected to be solely responsible for and will need an adult carer. It is important to consider any other pets in the household and all family members when thinking of buying a kitten or cat as a pet to ensure a cat will fit into the lifestyle, routine and environment of the family as a whole.

The type of cat suitable for a particular adult or family will vary as different breeds have different personalities and traits and long haired cats will require more care than short haired cats, so the breed of kitten or cat to be purchased also needs careful consideration.

A cat will require:

- Feeding - 4-5 times a day for kittens down to twice a day for cats over 6 months old
- Refreshing water bowl - daily
- Emptying of cat litter tray - daily
- Grooming - daily for long haired cats, weekly for short haired cats
- Interaction and play - daily
- Check for signs of injury or illness - daily
- Flea treatment - monthly
- Worming - monthly for kittens, every 3 months for cats over 6 months old
- Visit to vet for vaccinations - annually

If the cat becomes ill or suffers an injury it is likely to require veterinary treatment. In addition to the costs of any such veterinary treatment the cat may also require additional care and time eg cleaning wounds, administering medicines, regular vet visits, etc. Pet insurance companies do offer insurance cover for pet cats which can help towards the costs of veterinary treatment.

In addition it will be necessary to make plans for someone else to care for the cat when away, eg during family holidays, etc and if there are no friends or family that can undertake to look after the cat during these times then it may be necessary to pay to board the cat elsewhere or pay a pet sitter to pop over each day to look after the cat.



Rabbits

Below is an approximate guide to the costs of keeping a rabbit.

Equipment

A rabbit will require a hutch, or indoor cage if the rabbit is to be kept as a house rabbit, along with water bottle and food dish and this initial equipment is the largest cost in owning a rabbit. A rabbit hutch will cost £150-£300 and an indoor cage will cost £50-£80. The size of hutch or cage required will depend on the size and number of rabbits to be kept and the larger the hutch or cage the higher the cost. If the hutch does not include a run, a separate outside rabbit run can cost £60-£100. Water bottles and food dish will cost around £10.

Feed

Rabbits require a constant supply of grass or hay and this may need to be supplemented with a grain or pellet diet. This should be expected to cost approximately £10-£20 per month per rabbit depending on the size of the rabbit. In addition a rabbit will need to be fed vegetables and unless growing your own all year round, these will need to be bought and can cost an extra £10-£20 per month per rabbit.

Woodshavings

Woodshavings will be needed to cover the floor of the rabbit hutch or cage and can cost £5-£15 per month depending on the size of the cage or hutch.

Litter

If the rabbit is a house rabbit then it will need to be provided with a litter tray and litter. The amount of litter needed will cost approximately £10-£15 a month.

Vets Fees And Insurance

Rabbits needs to be vaccinated annually against VHD and Myxomatosis and these vaccinations can cost around £30-£40.

Veterinary treatment when a rabbit is ill can be costly but it is possible to take out pet insurance for rabbits to cover vets fees in the event of illness and injury suffered and this can cost £6-£15 per month.

Spaying/Neutering

Spaying or neutering will be necessary if keeping mixed sexed rabbits together to prevent them from breeding or if keeping two male rabbits together to prevent fighting. However, spaying or neutering a rabbit can also benefit health and temperament, so may be considered even if not keeping mixed sexed rabbits or two male rabbits together. Spaying or neutering a rabbit can cost £50-£100.

Microchipping

Microchipping can help in recovering an escaped, lost or stolen rabbit and can cost £15-£20.

Extra Costs

Although the main regular costs of keeping a rabbit are listed above there are always unexpected costs that occur. In addition it is often necessary to purchase health products for minor ailments, replace equipment, etc. All such costs can mount up over a year and add to the cost of owning a rabbit. Therefore it is always best to factor in an additional cost of £100-£150 per annum for extras when working out whether keeping a rabbit can be afforded.



Summary

The table below gives a summary of the average annual costs involved in keeping one rabbit. If keeping more than one rabbit together, as it is recommended to do, then the costs will be double with the exception of the equipment costs as the rabbits will share equipment although these costs will be towards the higher end of the range given as a larger hutch would need to be purchased than for keeping a single rabbit.

Item	One-off costs	Annual costs
Equipment	£160 - £310	
Spaying / neutering	£50 - £100	
Microchipping	£15 - £20	
Food and hay		£240 - £480
Woodshavings / litter		£60 - £180
Vaccinations		£30 - £40
Insurance		£72 - £180
Extras		£100 - £150
Total	£210 - 430	£502 - £1,030

This means that an average cat could cost over £4,000 if it lives for 5 years, or nearly £8,000 if it lives for 10 years!

Taking on any pet requires a commitment to provide proper care for it during its life and in the case of rabbits this can be for 5-10 years or longer.

A child cannot be expected to provide all the care and finances required to keep a pet rabbit, particularly if the rabbit requires veterinary treatment, so it is important if buying a rabbit for a child that an adult member of the family is prepared to share the commitment of owning and caring for the rabbit.

A rabbit will require:

- Feeding - twice daily
- Refreshing water bottle - daily
- Interaction and companionship - particularly if kept on its own - daily
- Grooming - daily for long haired rabbits, weekly for short haired rabbits
- Cleaning of its hutch or cage - at least once a week

In addition a rabbit may require veterinary treatment if the rabbit becomes ill which in addition to being costly can also require additional care and time eg cleaning wounds, administering medicines, regular vet visits, etc.

Some pet insurance companies do offer veterinary insurance cover for pet rabbits which can help towards the costs of veterinary treatment.

Consideration also needs to be given to where the rabbit will be placed - a rabbit cage or hutch is rather large and requires space in a fairly peaceful location, that offers some protection from the weather elements.

In addition it will be necessary to make plans for someone else to care for the rabbit when away, eg during family holidays, etc and if there are no friends or family that can undertake to look after the rabbit during these times then it may be necessary to pay to board the rabbit elsewhere or pay a pet sitter to pop over each day to look after the rabbit.



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Responsible pet ownership

Owning a pet is a privilege and, as a pet owner, you must make sure your pet is properly looked after. This includes:

- Committing to the relationship for the life of the pet.
- Be careful when choosing your pet – making sure it's right for your home and lifestyle.
- Being able to invest the time and money that the pet needs.
- Only have the number of pets you can properly care for – making sure each pet gets the food, water, shelter, health care and companionship it needs.
- Tagging or microchipping pets that need it
- Spaying or neutering your pet, or only breeding from it in a responsible way.
- Making sure your pet is registered with (and visits) a vet.
- Getting your pet vaccinated, flea-treated and wormed when needed.
- Taking your pet to the vet when it's ill and following her / his advice.
- Train your pet to do the things it has to do (walking to heel, going to the toilet in the proper place etc).
- Not allowing your pet to become a stray, be a noise nuisance or bother other people.
- Exercise your pet and give it things to do so it doesn't get bored or lonely.
- Make sure your pet is properly restrained when travelling in a car.
- Make proper arrangements to look after your pet if you are going away.
- Knowing how to evacuate your pet in case of fire.
- If you can't care for the pet any longer, make sure it's properly rehomed.
- When your pet gets older and starts to become ill, be prepared to make hard decisions in consultation with your vet about end-of-life care.

